

Success Story

RICHMOND DISTRICT OFFICE

Ronald E. Bew, District Director

Release Date: February 23, 2009

Contact: Robert McLoone (804) 771-2400

Madison (Ave) & Main (Street) USA Meet at the Crossroads of Success in Virginia



In 2005 Dave Saunders had an idea to start an advertising and new media firm that would bring the creativity of Madison Ave to Main Street businesses, right here in the heart of Virginia.

Saunders started Madison+Main on a shoestring budget, and with the help and guidance of the Greater Richmond Small Business Development Center (SBDC). He leased space for business operations at AdvanTech, a small business incubator, conveniently located right around the corner from the SBDC in downtown Richmond. Small Business Development Centers, partially funded by the Small Business Administration, provide a variety of counseling and training assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners, promoting economic development in local communities. The Virginia SBDC network consists of 30 centers located throughout the Commonwealth.

Madison+Main was started with \$25,000 secured from Saunders' home equity line of credit and a \$25,000 loan from Business Loan Express under the SBA 7(a) Loan Program. In 2007, as the business grew and needed additional capital, new financing was secured from First Market Bank, again utilizing the SBA's 7(a) loan guaranty program. Under the 7(a) Loan Program SBA provides a 75% to 85% guaranty to lenders, reducing their risk and enabling them to make small business loans they would otherwise be unable to make. The eligibility requirements are designed to be as broad as possible in order that this lending program can accommodate the most diverse variety of small business financing needs, including start-up funding for small businesses like Madison+Main.

The business has experienced phenomenal growth in its short life span. Starting with just himself as CIO (Chief Idea Officer) and one additional employee, Saunders now employs 12 talented, energetic, fun and professional associates, or "Madison+Main-iacs," as they call themselves. Each of these individuals share the same entrepreneurial spirit and initiative, which enables them to consistently produce professional work that benefits both their clients and their own company.

Madison+Main's growth and success has not gone unnoticed. They were finalists for both the Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce's IMPACT Award and Venture Forum's Greater Richmond Companies to Watch in 2008. Saunders was also nominated as the SBA's "Small Business Person of the Year" for 2009.

In spite of the success achieved, it hasn't always been easy, according to Saunders. Although the business has not had to overcome much "adversity"—it's been relatively smooth sailing when it comes to client acquisition, client retention, employee acquisition and employee retention—the firm has had to deal with some problems such as the rapid growth of the company, the challenges of being in a building with inadequate phone services and internet access, two fires and a burglary. Furthermore, the downturn in the economy affected Madison+Main as it did so many businesses in late 2007. Although they had their share of "sob stories" or "hiccups," as Saunders says, the real point of all this is that regardless of fires, theft, and the lack of adequate technology compounded by rapid growth, Madison+Main has prospered and gained the appreciation of many clients. "After all," Saunders said, "you can't let a little bug on the windshield ruin the whole road trip, and we're in this thing for the long haul."

Madison+Main's focus has been on small to medium-sized businesses, but they prefer to think of such companies as "Challenger brands." Saunders's "Keep it Simple" philosophy has four basic rules or, rather, goals. "Each and every day we strive to *do good work, keep clients happy and make money*. The fourth rule is to *have fun*," Saunders explained. He added, "Having fun makes happy people and clients want to work with people who are happy. Friendship, trust and support between each teammate are what really fuel the working dynamic at Madison+Main. Sometimes, we refer to each other as family. It's a much stronger bond than 'team.'"

Making money may be one of Madison+Main's golden rules, but it is not always about making money, said Saunders. Instead, it is about giving back. The firm provides original marketing and advertising materials to non-profit organizations with severely limited budgets. In the past three years, Madison+Main has donated or traded over \$100,000 in creative and technical services to Chesterfield County Schools, Chesterfield Public Education Foundation, Rotary, Retail Merchants Association, Medical Reserve Corps, Positive Vibe Café, The Greater Richmond Partnership and many others. Their campaign for Chesterfield Schools earned national awards from the Council on Adult Basic Education, National School Public Relations Association, and National Council on Education in 2008. And, in November of 2007, the Chesterfield County School Board presented them with an award of merit.

At the end of the day it's not really about getting awards (although they sure do like them a lot!). Saunders pointed out that their "achievements truly lie in the success of their clients. When we do well, they do well. So, their success is our success."

###